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Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky

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1722-1794

Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky

1722 - 1972

DECEMBER 21, 1972, marked the 250th anniversary of the birth of Schema-Archimandrite Paisius Velichkovsky. This remarkable anniversary went almost totally unnoticed in the Orthodox world, which is so occupied with its worldly problems and its very struggle for survival. And yet, for Orthodox Christians of the 20th century there is no more important Holy Father of recent times than Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky. This is so not merely because of his holy life; not merely because, like another Saint Gregory Palamas, he defended the hesychast practice of the mental Prayer of Jesus; not only because he, through his many disciples, inspired the great monastic revival of the 19th century which flowered most notably in the holy Elders of Optina Monastery; but most of all because he redirected the attention of Orthodox Christians to the *sources* of Holy Orthodoxy, which are the only foundation of true Orthodox life and thought whether of the past or of the present, whether of monks or of laymen.

It is these very same sources — the Divine Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers — which are the foundation of all genuine Orthodoxy in our own times. The observer of the Orthodox world today can see easily enough what "Orthodoxy" becomes when these sources are not made the foun-

dation of life and thought. Without them "Orthodoxy" becomes a matter of unenlightened custom and habit on the one hand, and of subjective whim ready to follow any religious or intellectual fashion of the times, on the other.

The followers of unenlightened custom are themselves innocent; they merely accept what has been "handed down" to them. But not seeing the *meaning* and not knowing the *sources* of what has been handed down, they are easily led into error, accepting customs which the Church has allowed only out of her condescension or economy as if they were the best of Orthodoxy, and also improper customs of recent heterodox origin and inspiration, together with the pure and meaningful Orthodox customs handed down from the Holy Fathers. Under strict yet prudent pastors, such people can be guided in the true path of Orthodoxy; but in our own time of such widespread irresponsible Church leadership, these people are more often guided gradually into a path of ever greater and more senseless innovation and reform, the clearest example of which is perhaps the Greek Archdiocese of America, where pews, organs, and Uniat spirituality and theology have become the new "customs" of an unfortunate people whose Orthodoxy has been stolen from it.

Far worse, however, is the state of those who, being unrooted in the true sources of Holy Orthodoxy, occupy the positions of pastors and theologians and in their "learned ignorance" seek to guide their flocks according to some fashionable intellectual current of the day. Such are the leaders of the "charismatic movement," swept off their feet by an experience which, while compatible with Protestantism and Papism, is easily discerned as a satanic deception by those who are rooted in and live in the Holy Fathers. Such also are the "theologians" of the "Paris" and other modernist schools who, being at home in heterodox modes of thought and life, dare to present the Holy Fathers themselves according to the disfigured modern understanding of them, transmitting neither their true message nor (much less) their Orthodox savor, giving rather an academic two-dimensional caricature of them, suitable only for presentation in decadent ecumenical salons and in lifeless academic journals.

Both of these types of "Orthodox" people are precisely those who are *cut off from the sources of Orthodoxy,* and who in turn help to cut others off from these sources. The movement of true Orthodoxy in our own times has seen with increasing clarity the need to separate itself from this pseudo- or semi-Orthodoxy and refind its roots in the true and unadulterated sources of Orthodoxy, the Holy Fathers. And this is precisely what the Blessed Paisius saw and did, making him a key figure for us today.

Having come to love the Holy Fathers and true Orthodox piety in his childhood, Blessed Paisius at the age of 17 saw that even in the best Orthodox school of Russia he was not being given the pure teaching of Holy Orthodoxy from the patristic sources, but rather something second-hand and accompanied by useless pagan learning; and, further, that an over-emphasis on the formal side of the Church's existence, greatly furthered by the Government in its at-

tempt to make the Church a "department" of the State, promoted chiefly the idea that church-minded people, the clergy and even the monks, occupied a definite place in the apparatus of the Church *organization.* This overemphasis of a real but decidedly secondary aspect of church life tended to obscure the primary aspect: the love and zeal for true Orthodoxy and true piety, which are what inspire every genuine Orthodox Christian, whether clergy, monk, or layman. Seeing the difficulty of exercising his love and zeal in the Russia of his time, Paisius left his homeland in search of a place where his tender Orthodox conscience could mature in blessed freedom and in the opportunity to draw instruction and inspiration from the unadulterated sources of Orthodoxy. Having come to spiritual maturity, Blessed Paisius then himself became a source and seedbed for the great monastic and patristic revival of Holy Russia in the 19th century. True patristic spirituality and its hesychast tradition, to be sure, never died out in Russia, not even in the 18th century, that age of pseudo-enlightenment when the Empress Catherine closed most of the Orthodox monasteries and strictly regulated the rest of them; no, it remained and provided the fertile ground on which the disciples and the example of Blessed Paisius were to bear such great spiritual fruits. But it required the patristic bees of the great Elder Paisius, bringing back the pollen of the true and free tradition of Orthodoxy under the much more favorable climate of the 19th century, to cause the native Russian trees to give forth such a marvelous abundance of spiritual fruit.

Today the situation of Orthodoxy is rather different, and much worse, than it was in the time of the Elder Paisius. In place of the veneer of paganism and Latinism which never actually touched the heart of Orthodoxy, we have today a prevailing atmosphere of modernist heterodoxy and senseless "keeping up with the times" which has pierced the very heart of some Orthodox Churches so deeply that they will doubtless never recover, and their children are deprived of Orthodoxy without even knowing what they have lost. In place of the heavy hand of governmental bureaucracy, we see the far heavier hand of pseudo-Christian and pagan ways of life which are depriving Orthodox Christians of something which was almost untouched in the time of Blessed Paisius: Orthodox piety, the whole Christian way of life. And, to make this whole difficult situation virtually impossible, we are beset with self-styled reformers and revivers who neither know nor feel nor love what Orthodoxy is and would "restore" the faithful to the latest fashion of Protestant scholarship or piety. The 17-year-old Orthodox youth of today has usually not been raised properly and consciously in Orthodox teaching and piety, or, if he has, the ever-increasing tempo of paganized modern life acts powerfully to negate his upbringing; he has usually not come to love the Holy Fathers and the Divine services from childhood, and to hunger for more; and there is scarcely anywhere he can turn in order to correct the deficiencies of his upbringing and environment: of all the Orthodox seminaries in the free world, it is doubtful that any save the Russian-language seminary at Holy Trinity Monastery (Jordanville, New York) will even attempt to give him an education

in genuine Orthodoxy. For such a youth not deeply grounded in Orthodoxy, the human side of the Church all too often becomes the center of attention, and the all too prevalent petty quarrels and injustices among church people are often sufficient to turn his attention away from the Church altogether, or—if some religious interest remains — to turn him toward one of the flourishing religious or social cults of the day, or even to the widely-advertised life of drugs and immorality.

Truly, we are far more in need today of a return to the sources of genuine Orthodoxy than Blessed Paisius was! Our situation is hopeless! And yet God's mercy does not leave us, and even today one may say that there is a movement of genuine Orthodoxy which consciously rejects the indifference, renovationism, and outright apostasy which are preached by the world-famous Orthodox "theologians" and "hierarchs," and also hungers for more than the "customary" Orthodoxy which is powerless before the onslaughts of a world refined in destroying souls. It is of course true that the world, saturated in Holy Orthodoxy, which produced Blessed Paisius no longer exists; and it is likewise true that the numbers of God-bearing elders whom Paisius met and produced on his path, even in an age of spiritual decline, are simply unheard of in our own days, which are surely the days of the last Christians. And yet it cannot be that the flame of truly Orthodox zeal will die out before the Second Coming of Christ; nor that if this flame exists, Christ our God will not show His zealots, even now, how to lead a true and inspired Orthodox life. In fact, *the message of Blessed Paisius is addressed precisely and directly to us, the last Christians*: in "The Scroll" he tells us that the Holy Fathers wrote their books "by the special Providence of God, so that in the last times this Divine work would not fall into oblivion."

Do you hear, O Orthodox Christians of these last times? These writings of the Holy Fathers, even those dealing with the highest form of spiritual life, have been preserved *for us,* so that even when it might seem that there are no God-bearing elders left at all, we may still have the unerring words of the Holy Fathers to guide us in leading a God-pleasing and zealous life. Therefore, they are wrong who teach that, because the end of the world is at hand, we must sit still, make no great efforts, simply preserve the doctrine that has been handed down to us, and hand it back, like the buried talent of the worthless servant (Matt. 25:24-30), to our Lord at His Coming! Blessed Paisius teaches that "solely by Orthodoxy of faith, without the diligent keeping of all Christ's commandments [i.e., putting Orthodoxy into *practice,* with great effort], *it is not at all possible to be saved.*" The time of the end, though it seems to be near, we do not know; however close, it is still future, and in the present we have only the same age-old fight against the unseen powers, against the world, and against our own passions, upon the outcome of which our eternal fate will be decided. Let us then struggle while it is still day, with the time and the weapons which our All-merciful God has given us!

BLESSED PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

The Life of Blessed Paisius is of special value to us because it is the Life of a Holy Father of modern times, one who lived like the ancients almost in our own day. All those deadly anti-spiritual currents which threaten now to enslave man completely — godless humanism, soulless ecumenism, and the fierce Revolution that has brought them to power upon the ruins of civilization in a sea of blood — either existed already or were born in his lifetime. The spiritual climate of his times was very similar to our own; many of our own temptations were his also; a number of our most pressing questions he answered for us. This virtual contemporary of ours struggled and was gloriously crowned, and God, seeing his labors, gave to him a hundredfold of spiritual fruits which are nourishing Orthodox Christians even to this day, and revealed in him the fount in modern times of the pure tradition of Russian Orthodoxy.

The Life of Elder Paisius which we here present was written by his own disciples, chiefly by Schema-monk Metrophanes of Niamets Monastery, and was published in its present form exactly 125 years ago (1847) by the God-bearing Elders of Optina Monastery as the first of the texts of the veritable patristic revival which they inspired in 19th-century Russia. It is much to be preferred to the 20th-century biography* in that it gives not only the *facts* of the Elder's life, but more importantly, the very *savor* of his struggles. It is itself a patristic text capable of guiding and inspiring the Orthodox believer today.

Blessed Paisius' great labors in the collection, textual correction, and translation of the writings of the Holy Fathers will be discussed in detail in later installments of his Life. In addition to the many patristic texts and a number of letters, Blessed Paisius also left two original works concerning the Prayer of Jesus and spiritual life. The first of these, "The Scroll" (a title which he gave to the work himself) will be printed in this and subsequent issues of *The Orthodox Word*. It was printed originally in Slavonic together with the Life of Elder Paisius in the Optina edition of 1847, and was later published in Russian in *The Prayer of Jesus in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church* (Valaam Monastery, 1938).

* Archpriest Sergy Chetverikov, *The Moldavian Elder, Schema-Archimandrite Paisius Velichkovsky,* two volumes, Petseri, Estonia, 1938. In the text below some passages (indicated in the footnotes) have been added to the original Life from this source, particularly where the words of Elder Paisius himself have been quoted. The author did research at Niamets Monastery and was thus able to use manuscripts written by Paisius himself; his whole tone and approach, however, are those of the worldly 20th century, and he does not do justice to the spiritual message of Blessed Paisius.

The Life and Ascetic Labor of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part One.

1. BIRTH AND PARENTS OF OUR FATHER PAISIUS. 2. HIS CHILDHOOD

OUR FATHER of blessed memory, Schema-hieromonk Paisius, was born in the year 1722 on December 21 in the city of Poltava in Little Russia, the eleventh of twelve children of pious parents, and was called in holy baptism Peter, after St. Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow, on whose feast day he was born. His father was John Velichkovsky, Archpriest of Poltava, and his mother was Irene. In the fourth year after his birth his father departed this temporal life into eternal life, and he was left with his mother and his eldest brother John, who after his father was also priest of the Poltava church of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-virgin Mary, where his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had also been priests.

His mother gave him over to learn reading and writing, and with the Lord's help, in a little over two years he had studied the reading primer, the Horologion, and the Psalter, and from his eldest brother he learned how to write. And so with God's help he began to read books quite easily and in part to understand them; and he read most industriously the books of the Divine Scriptures, the Old and especially the New Testament, the Lives of Saints, the instructions of St. Ephraim and St. Dorotheus, the Margarite of St. John Chrysostom, and others. And from reading such books, above all the Lives of our Holy Fathers who have shone forth in monasticism, there began to be born in his soul a zeal for abandoning the world and accepting the holy monastic Angelic habit; wherefore he would seclude himself and read these books insatiably.

He loved silence to such an extent that his own mother rarely heard him talk; for he was meek and very modest and shy, not only with others but even with his own family. Such was the fervent desire toward God of this wondrous man while still only ten years old, that everyone of good sense who saw or heard of him was astonished at his good behavior and zeal and fervency and glorified God, saying: Glory be to Thee, Christ God, for Thou hast raised up a chosen one from among Thy people.

3. The young Paisius goes to the city of Kiev

WHEN HE reached the thirteenth year of his age, his older brother John also departed to the Lord, after having been priest just five years. And then it was needful for his mother, taking him with her (1734) to go to the Archbishop of Kiev Raphael, with a petition from Colonel Basil Basilevich Kochabei, who was Paisius' godfather, and some estimable citizens, so as to confirm for him by a document his father's place in the above-mentioned church. And when, in the presence of the hierarch, the boy recited, piously and with fitting expression, some verses which had been composed by a learned man, the hierarch rejoiced and, blessing him, said: "You will be your father's successor." And he gave his mother a document and, instructing her to send the boy to the church school in Kiev, let them go with his blessing. After returning home, she sent Paisius to Kiev for study, where he studied for just four years. With burning zeal he occupied himself above all in the reading of holy books, from which he more and more became confirmed in his unwavering intention to become a monk.

4. His desire for the unhypocritical monastic life

AT THIS TIME Paisius had some friends who thought just as he did and had one and the same intention to become monks. Assembling in a certain secret and quiet place, they would talk the whole night through until the bell sounded, as to how they might bring their intention into actuality and where they might find a place where, with God's help, they might be tonsured monks and live truly according to the monastic vow. After much consultation and diligent study, they made in their souls an absolute and unchangeable covenant that their renunciation from the world, their tonsure and their monastic life would not be in those monasteries where there is a great abundance of food and drink and every kind of bodily convenience, glory, and ease. They quoted, in confirmation of their covenant, the holy writings of all the ancient saints who had been monks in poverty, and also St. Simeon the New Theologian, who spoke thus (Chapters on Activity, Ch. 6): "Flee the world; see that you do not give your soul over to comfort, etc.; since, being tonsured in such monasteries, it will be impossible for us to follow the poverty of Christ according to the monastic vow and live an abstinent life: that is, we should be in want of needful things and be in every kind of bodily discomfort for the sake of the soul's salvation. But because of our weakness, and yet again from disturbance and from contact with others, and most of all because of our own will and our uneven and unsteady fervency of soul, we shall have to depart from the narrow path that leads to eternal life and become lost on the broad path that leads to ruin, according to the word of the Lord. And it is better to remain in the world than to renounce everything in the world only to live pleasing the flesh, in every kind of ease and abundance, to the scandal of the world and the dishonor of the monastic habit, and to the eternal judgment of our souls at the Day of Judgment."

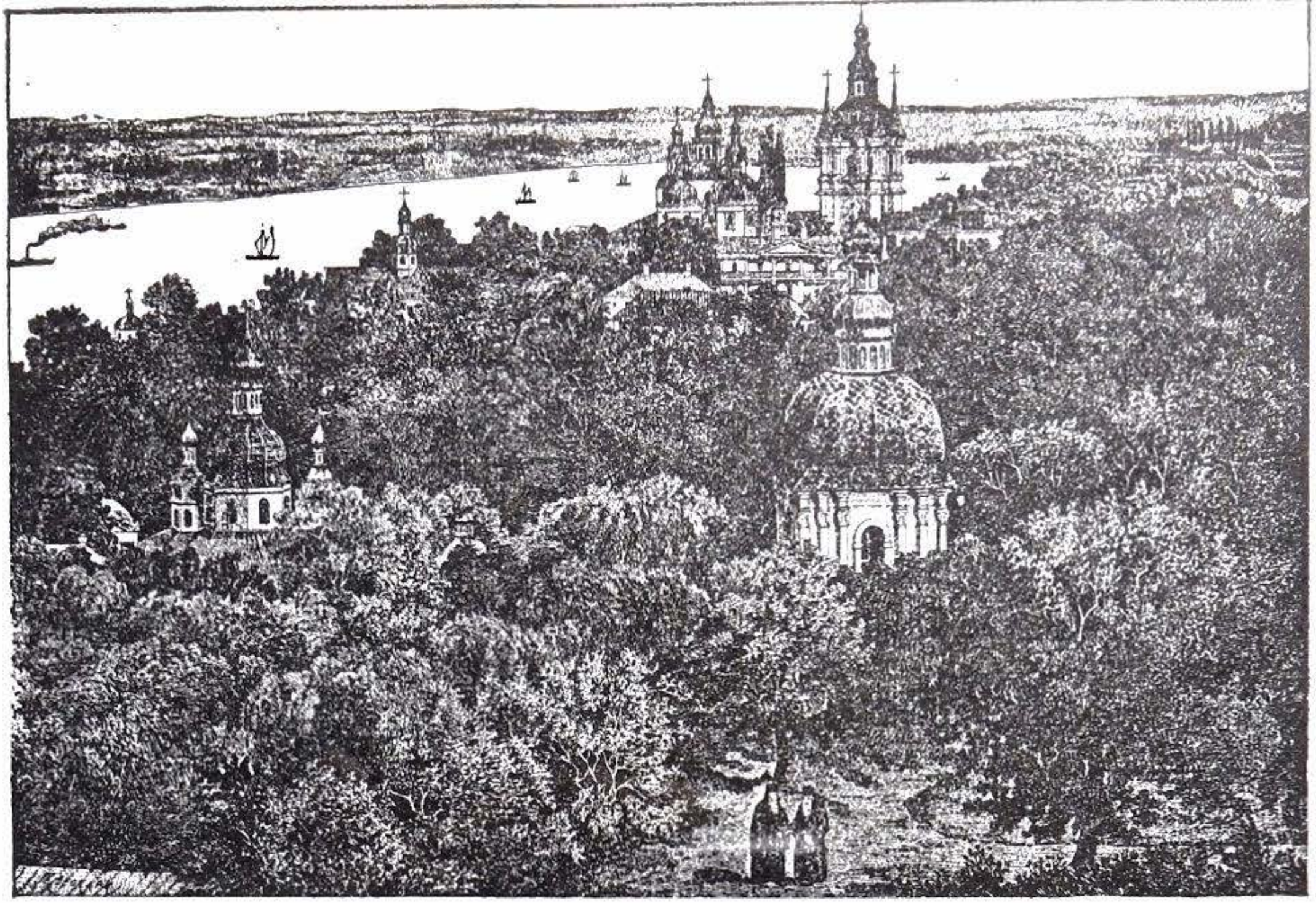
Further, Paisius came to know with certainty from the Divine writings of the Gospels and the Fathers that for one who desires monasticism, without obedience and humility, without poverty and patience, without faith and love and the complete cutting off of one's own will and reasoning, and in a word: without the diligent keeping of all Christ's commandments, solely by Orthodoxy of faith it is not at all possible to be saved. And so the devout youth made a most firm covenant in his soul before God to force himself with all his soul to a double measure of bodily deeds in fulfillment of Christ's commandments. Likewise he resolved in no way to judge his neighbor even if he saw him sin with his own eyes. For he who judges his neighbor assumes the place of God; and can there be anything more terrible than this? (Matt. 7:1.)

General view of the Kiev-Caves Lavra

Again, he resolved to have no hatred against his neighbor, inasmuch as, according to the Holy Scriptures, hatred and malice are greater than any other sins. Further, he covenanted with himself to forgive his neighbor with his whole heart and soul for any kind of offense, in hope that his own sins would be forgiven (Athanasius the Great; Abba Dorotheus; John 3:5; Matt. 5:16; Luke 6:36). For he who does not forgive his neighbor his offenses or any kind of hurt, himself will not have forgiveness of his sins from the Heavenly Father. And this covenant, given before God, Paisius kept in act for his whole life, God's grace giving him strength.

At the beginning of Paisius' fourth year of studies in Kiev, after the conclusion of peace between Russia and Turkey, which brought peace to the Orthodox lands of the Balkans, there came to Kiev the Metropolitan of Moldavia, Anthony. Paisius had the opportunity of receiving the blessing of the Metropolitan, and he loved very much the hierarch's celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Moldavian language. From this time there arose in his heart, as he said later, a great love for the Moldavian people.

At this time it was noticed that Paisius had entirely abandoned his studies, and the Prefect of the school called him to demand an explanation for this. Paisius, usually meek and shy, then replied with a boldness hitherto un-



Kiev-Caves Lavra: Entrance to St. Anthony's Caves above the Dnepr

known to him, saying: "The first reason is that, having the firm intention to become a monk and realizing the uncertainty of the hour of death, I wish as soon as possible to receive the tonsure. The second reason is that from outward learning I do not see any benefit for my soul, hearing only the names of pagan gods and wise men — Cicero, Aristotle, Plato... Learning wisdom from them, people today have become completely blinded and have stepped away from the right path; they pronounce lofty words, but within they are full of darkness and obscurity, and all their wisdom is only on their tongues. Seeing no benefit from such teaching, and fearing lest I myself be corrupted by it, I have abandoned it. Finally, the third reason is this: looking at the fruits of this teaching in the clergy of the monastic order, I have noticed that, like worldly functionaries, they live in great honor and glory, adorn themselves with expensive garments, travel on splendid horses and in fine carriages — I do not say this in judgment of them, may this not be! I only fear and tremble lest I myself, after learning outward wisdom and becoming a monk, should fall into yet a worse infirmity. Behold, it is for all these reasons that I have abandoned outward learning." When the Prefect saw that his own arguments against these points had no effect on Paisius, he subjected him to a merciless physical punishment.*

* These two paragraphs are from Chetverikov, vol. I, pp. 12-13.

5. His wandering. 6. Paisius enters the monastery of Lyubetz.

BEING IN SUCH a state of zeal for monastic life, and occupying himself with reading and instruction in these things, and even more weeping and lamenting, and being in perplexity as to what to do, he began to pray, with contrite heart and many and bitter tears, beating his breast and falling down before Christ God, that He might instruct him on the path of salvation. Weeping, he thought to himself: "What shall I do, and where shall I go?" Then his soul became afire with the love of wandering, and having left school, he departed from the city of Kiev. And so he wandered, sad of soul, like a poor stranger, seeking the Heavenly Fatherland; for the Lord gave him even in his youth the gray hair of understanding, wisdom, and humility of wisdom. At the same time he left also his friends, who placed obstacles in the way of his speedy departure.

And so he went, God instructing him, to the Holy Monastery of Lyubetz, which is near the city of Lyubich, on the bank of the river Dnepr. When he came, with God's help, to this monastery, a certain father indicated to him: "That is Father Nicephorus our abbot standing there"; and he brought Paisius to him. And Paisius fell at his feet, asking his blessing. The abbot, according to custom, blessed him and asked: "Where are you from, brother, and what is your name, and why have you come to our monastery?" And the youth replied: "I am from the land of Kiev, and I have come to this Holy Monastery to be in obedience, and my name is Peter." The abbot, hearing this, accepted him with love and assigned him a cell and an obedience in the storeroom. He fell to the abbot's feet, took a blessing from him, and undertook his obedience with all fervor.

7. The God-pleasing governance of Abbot Nicephorus.

PAISIUS HAD great joy in his soul being in this monastery, for he saw that this holy abbot governed the brethren as a loving father, with great love and meekness, humility and longsuffering. And if it happened that one of the brethren, being human, sinned in something, being asked for forgiveness he would correct such a one in a spirit of meekness, chastising him by soul-profiting words and giving him a spiritual punishment according to his strength, depending on the sin. Therefore all the brethren remained in deep peace and in love for their father and for each other.

Being concerned for the outward life of Paisius, the abbot also did not leave his inward life without guidance. He gave him the book of St. John of the Ladder, and this book so pleased Paisius that he resolved, in his free

time at night, to copy it out for himself. Having no candles, he lit a splinter of wood, and thrusting it into a crack in the wall, he copied out the book by its light. The smoke from the splinter filled the cell, hurt his eyes and made it difficult to breathe. Then Paisius would open the window for some time, let the smoke out, and again set to work copying. In time he was able to acquire a little lamp, and then the copying went more quickly, so that by the time he left the monastery he had succeeded in copying out almost half the book.*

8. Change of abbots. 9. Paisius unintentionally angers the new abbot. 10. He leaves the monastery secretly.

AFTER PAISIUS had been in this monastery for three months, another abbot was assigned to it, a learned man, Herman Zagorovsky. After he had come to the Lyubetz monastery, he began to govern it not like the preceding blessed abbot, with love, but rather dictatorially; and the brethren, having found out about his way of governing, became quite terrified, and some of them out of fear fled from the monastery, without knowing where to go. Paisius, remaining in his obedience in the storeroom, feared and trembled greatly lest he sin in something, but even so he did not escape the evil. Once the abbot called him and commanded him to give him a certain food (cabbage) for his meal. But Paisius, because of the briefness of his words, did not understand what kind of food it was, and he did not dare to ask him. He told the cook, and they, deciding which food might be best, took it and cooked it for the abbot. The abbot called Paisius to his cell and, getting up from his meal, said to him: "Is this the kind of food you give me for my meal?" And saying this, he struck him on the cheek so hard that he could hardly stay on his feet; and in addition, the abbot so fiercely pushed him that he fell over the threshold of his cell. When he got up, the abbot yelled at him: "Get out, lazy one!" The humble Paisius went out, all trembling from fear, and thought to himself: "If he gets angry at me, the poor one, only for this, then if I should happen to sin before him in something greater, what will I not suffer from him?" Besides this, Paisius heard from his spiritual father that the abbot was boasting that he would yet punish him with a most cruel punishment. And so he thought of leaving across the Dnepr. Praying to the Lord secretly at night with tears, he went down to the Dnepr and with God's help he crossed to the other side on the ice; and giving thanks to God with joyous tears, he went down the river Dnepr to the monasteries in the Ukraine.

* This paragraph is from Chetverikov, I, pp. 29-30.

11. He enters the Medvedovsky Monastery of St. Nicholas

HAVING COME to the Monastery of St. Nicholas, which is on an island in the river Tyasmin and is called Medvedovsky, where the abbot was the reverend Hieromonk Nicephorus (different from the Nicephorus already mentioned), Paisius came up to him, fell to his feet, took a blessing from him, and began to beg him to accept him into his holy monastery under obedience. The abbot accepted him with love and gave him a cell and the obedience of serving in the refectory and going to the cliros to read and sing. And when the Fast of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God arrived, on the Transfiguration of the Lord, the abbot tonsured him as a Rasophore Monk,* changing his name from Peter to Platon; he was then nineteen years old. And remaining in this monastery, he served his obedience in the refectory with fervor; he strove by all means to observe the rule of church prayer during the day as much as his obedience gave him time, and at night he never omitted it; likewise, at the abbot's command, he went to the cliros. Further, his fervor in labor gave much help to the cook.

However, Paisius was not able in this monastery to live in obedience to an experienced elder, as he desired, as we know from his own words many years later: "When I left the world, desiring with warm zeal to serve the Lord fervently in monasticism, I was unable at the beginning of my monasticism to see even a trace from anyone of sound and correct understanding, instruction and advice in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, concerning how I, an inexperienced beginner, should begin my poor monastic life. Settling in one remote monastery, where by God's mercy I was enabled to receive the beginning of the monastic calling, I did not hear from anyone a proper explanation of what obedience is, with what meaning and purpose it was instituted, and what benefit it has for a novice. Neither the superior of the monastery nor my elder gave me any instruction in this regard. Having tonsured me (as a Rasophore monk) without any period of trial beforehand, they left me to live without any spiritual direction. The elder to whom I was entrusted, having stayed in the monastery only a week after my tonsure, left for no one knows where, telling me in parting: 'Brother, you have been to school; live as God instructs you.' ...Thus I was left like a sheep wandering without a shepherd or instructor. And nowhere was I able to live in submission to some father, even though in my youth my soul was most inclined to

* Rasophore Monk: One who has put on the rasson or outer monastic robe, but has not given the monastic vows and been tonsured in the mantle.

submission; yet I did not receive such a divine gift because of my unworthiness."*

12. Persecution by the Uniats. 13. Paisius goes to Kiev.

WHILE HE WAS laboring thus in the monastery in peace and quiet, by God's permission a persecution was raised in the Ukraine against the Orthodox Faith by the evil-opinioned Uniats, who strove to convert the Orthodox Christians to their impiety.

Some of the terrors of the Uniat rule in the Ukraine at this time are described by Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov in his Church History: "It is difficult to imagine all the cruelties to which the Orthodox were subjected at that time. Orthodox priests were tied to pillars, beaten with whips, placed in prison, tortured with hunger, their fingers were cut off with swords, their arms and legs broken. Whoever then remained alive but did not desire the Unia was chased out of his house. Attacks were made on monasteries in broad daylight, they were pillaged and burned, the monks were tortured and often killed. The residents of villages and small towns were tortured with inhuman tortures in order to make them Uniats. The Orthodox people were chased like sheep into the Latin and Uniat churches. During the very reading of the Gospel in an Orthodox church, an official would enter, beat the people with a whip and chase them like cattle from their stalls. Many suffered the destruction of their homes, terrible beatings, and some death."**

Because of the Uniat persecution there was great disturbance and anger in the monastery; and when the fathers who were living there saw that the Uniats kept the church locked and sealed for more than a month, some of them began to leave, each going wherever he wished. Paisius went with some of the brethren who were going to Kiev, inasmuch as for fear of the Poles it was impossible then to go to Moldavia. This was clearly by God's Providence, so that His faithful servant would find out about his mother. Coming to Kiev, he was accepted into the Kiev Caves Lavra and assigned to the printshop under the reverend Hieromonk Macarius, in order to learn how to make engravings. And while the Blessed one was staying in the Lavra, there came from Poltava to Kiev to venerate the holy places his relative, the wife of his deceased brother the Archpriest John, and meeting him she began to tell him concerning his mother:

(*Continued on page* 261)

* This paragraph is from Chetverikov, I, pp. 82, 38.
** This paragraph is from Chetverikov, I, pp. 32-33.

The SCROLL

CONTAINING

SIX CHAPTERS ON MENTAL PRAYER

By Our Father of Blessed Memory,

ELDER PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

Against the blasphemer, a certain vain-minded monk-philosopher of the Moshensk mountains; written in the Moldavian monastery of Dragomirna.

The Foreword of Elder Paisius

REPORT HAS COME to me, the least of all, that certain ones among the monastic calling are daring to blaspheme the Divine, ever-memorable and God-created Prayer of Jesus, sacredly performed by the mind in the heart, founding this their babbling on the sand of vain-wisdom without anything to support it. They are armed for this, I dare to say, by the enemy, so that by their tongues as by a weapon he might find fault with this most faultless and Divine work, and that by the blindness of their understanding he might darken this mental sun. Therefore, lamenting such evil-wisdom of these who have *gone astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies* (Ps. 57: 4), and fearing lest any of those not yet firm in understanding, hearing such fables, might fall like them into the pit of blasphemy and mortally sin before God, blaspheming the teaching of very many of our God-bearing Fathers who have testified and taught of this Divine prayer, being enlightened by Divine grace; and further, not enduring any more to hear the blaspheming words against this faultless work, and in addition being persuaded by the entreaty of the zealots of this soul-saving work — I have resolved, even though this be beyond my infirm mind and weak powers, calling on the help of my most sweet Jesus, without Whom no one can do anything, in order to refute the false reason of the vain-minded and to fortify the God-chosen flock of brethren gathered in our monastery in the name of Christ: to write down a little on Divine mental prayer in the form of extracts from the teaching of the Holy Fathers, so as to give a secure, unwavering, and undoubted testimony of it.

Being dust and ashes, I bend the mental knees of my heart before the unapproachable greatness of Thy Divine glory, and I entreat Thee, O my all-sweet Jesus, Only-begotten Son and Word of God, radiance of the glory and image of the Hypostasis of the Father! Enlighten my darkened mind and thought and grant Thy grace to my miserable soul, so that this work of mine may serve for the glory of Thy most holy name and for the benefit of those who wish, through the mental and sacred work of prayer, mentally to cling to Thee our God, and to carry Thee, the priceless pearl, ceaselessly in their souls and hearts, and for the correction of those who in their extreme ignorance have dared to blaspheme this Divine work!

CHAPTER ONE

That mental prayer was a work of the Holy Fathers of antiquity; and against the blasphemers of this sacred and most faultless prayer.

LET IT BE KNOWN that this Divine work of sacred mental prayer was the unceasing occupation of our God-bearing Fathers of antiquity, and in many desert places as well as in cœnobitic monasteries it shone forth like the sun among monks: on Mount Sinai, in Scetis of Egypt, on the Mount of Nitria, in Jerusalem and in the monasteries which are about Jerusalem, and in a word — in the entire East, in Constantinople, on Mount Athos and in the islands of the sea; and in the latest times, by the grace of Christ, in Great Russia also. By this mental heedfulness of sacred prayer, many of our God-bearing Fathers, being kindled by a seraphimic flame of love for God, and after God for their neighbor, became the strictest keepers of God's commandments, and having purified their souls and hearts of all the faults of the old man, they were enabled to be chosen vessels of the Holy Spirit. Being filled with His various Divine gifts, they were manifested by their lives as lamps and fiery pillars in the world, and having performed numberless miracles, by deed and word they brought an incalculable multitude of human souls to salvation. Many of them, being moved by a secret Divine inspiration, wrote books of their teachings concerning this Divine mental prayer, in accordance with the Divine Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which books are filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. And this was by the special Providence of God, so that in the last times this Divine work would not fall into oblivion. Many of these books, by God's allowance because of our sins,

were destroyed by the Saracens who subjugated the Greek kingdom; but some of them by God's Providence have been preserved to our times.

Against the above-mentioned Divine mental work and the preservation of the paradise of the heart, none among those of right belief has ever dared to pronounce blasphemy, but they have shown great honor and extreme reverence for it as for something full of every spiritual benefit. But the source of malice and opponent of every good work, the devil, seeing that above all those in the monastic state through this work of mental prayer were choosing the good part and sitting with undistracted love at the feet of Jesus, prospering in the perfection of His Divine commandments, and through this were becoming a light and illumination for the world — began to melt from envy and use all his snares in order to criticize and blaspheme this soul-saving work and, if possible, to uproot it entirely from the face of the earth. And so he both destroyed books, as was said above, through the Saracens who are in all ways like him, and likewise sowed his soul-corrupting tares in the midst of the pure and heavenly wheat of this work, in order to make a blasphemy against this saving work through senseless men so that the self-willed who come in contact with this work for the sake of their own self-exaltation, would reap tares in place of wheat and find perdition in place of salvation. And even with this the devil was not satisfied, but found in the lands of Italy the Calabrian serpent, forerunner of Antichrist, in his pride in every way like the devil, the heretic Barlaam; and settling in him with all his power, he moved him to blaspheme our Orthodox Faith, as is written in detail in the Lenten Triodion, in the Synaxarion of the Second Sunday of the holy Great Lent. Among other things, he dared in various ways, both by tongue and by pen, to blaspheme and denounce also the sacred mental prayer, as is written in his sacred book, in the 31st chapter, by our Father among the Saints Simeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica, whose very words I here set forth:

"This impious Barlaam blasphemed and wrote much both against the sacred prayer and against the Divine grace and light which were on Mount Tabor (Matt. 17:5). Not understanding, and not even capable of understanding (for how could one attain to this who had become vain in mind and proud in the conceit of his thoughts?) the meaning of the words *Pray without ceasing* (I Thes. 5:18), or of the words *I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind also* (I Cor. 14:15); or of *hymning and singing in your hearts to the Lord* (Col. 3:16); or of *God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son,* that is, grace, *into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father* (Gal. 4:6); or of

I had rather speak five words with my mind than ten thousand words in a tongue (I Cor. 14:19) — he renounced mental prayer itself, or rather, the invocation of the Lord, which is also the confession of Peter when he confessed: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God* (Matt. 16:16), and the tradition of the Lord Himself when He said in the Gospel: *Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He shall give it you* (John 15:16), and likewise: *In My name shall they cast out devils* (Mark 16:17), and the like. For His name is eternal life (John 17:3): *But these,* it is said, *are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name* (John 20:31); and the Holy Spirit is given through the invocation of Christ: *No man can say the Lord Jesus, except by the Holy Spirit* (I Cor. 12:3). Concerning this it is written in a myriad places.

And what did the serpent, fount of malice, succeed in doing by his undertaking with the son of perdition, the thrice-cursed heretic Barlaam, whom he taught, as I have said, to blaspheme against sacred mental prayer? By his blasphemy could he darken the light of this mental work, and, as he hoped, uproot it entirely? By no means; but his malady was turned upon his own head. For at that time the great champion and advocate of piety, most radiant among the Saints, our Father Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, who in complete obedience and in the unceasing sacred exercise of mental prayer shone forth like the sun on the Holy Mountain of Athos with gifts of the Holy Spirit, before his elevation to the Hierarchal Throne of that Church, in the reign of the most divine emperor Andronicus Paleologus, in the most illustrious great church of the Wisdom of God in the reigning city, at the great Council which was assembled against the above-mentioned heretic Barlaam, being filled with the Spirit of God and clothed in invisible power from above — he closed that mouth which was opened against God and shamed him utterly, and by his words and writings inspired with fire he burned his heresies, suitable only for kindling, and all his blasphemies and turned them into ashes. And this heretic Barlaam with Acindynus and all who thought as they were thrice given over to anathema by the whole Catholic Church of God. And even up to now, yearly on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, he together with other heretics is cursed by the same Church in this way: *To Barlaam and Acindynus and their followers and successors — anathema thrice.*

Behold, O friends who dare to blaspheme mental prayer, and see who was its first blasphemer: was it not the heretic Barlaam, who was thrice given

over by the Church to anathema and is to be cursed forever? Do you not also, with your blasphemy, enter into communion with this heretic and those who think as He? Do you not tremble in your souls lest you similarly fall under the Church's curse and become estranged from God? In rising against a most sacred work and scandalizing by your blasphemy the souls of your near ones who are unsteady in understanding, do you not fear the terrible threat of God for this in the Gospel? Are you not afraid, in the words of the Apostle, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Heb. 10:31), that for this you will fall, if you do not repent, into both temporal and eternal punishment? What plausible reason have you found for blaspheming this most faultless and most blessed thing? I am in total perplexity.

Do you fancy that the invocation of the name of Jesus is of no benefit? But it is not possible to be saved in any other than in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is the human mind, through which the prayer acts, defective? But this is impossible. For God created man in His image and likeness; and the image and likeness of God is the soul of man, which according to God's creation is pure and faultless: therefore the mind, being the chief of the senses of the soul, as sight is in the body, is likewise faultless.

Is then the heart, upon which as upon an altar the mind sacredly offers to God the mystical sacrifice of prayer, deserving of blasphemy? In no way. Being the creation of God, as is the whole human body, it is most good. And if the invocation of Jesus is soul-saving, and the mind and heart of man are the work of God's hands — then how is a man at fault if he sends up with his mind from the depths of his heart prayer to the most sweet Jesus and begs of Him mercy?

Or is the reason why you blaspheme and deny mental prayer because it seems to you that God does not hear mystical prayer performed in the heart, but hears only that which is pronounced by the lips? But this is a blasphemy against God: for God is knower of hearts and knows exactly all the most refined thoughts of the heart, even future thoughts, and knows them all as God and Omniscient. And He Himself seeks, as a pure and faultless sacrifice, just such mystical prayer sent up from the depths of the heart, having commanded: *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly* (Matt. 6:6). These words the lips of Christ, the lamp of the world and universal teacher, St. John Chrysostom, in his 19th

Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, with the God-given wisdom of the Holy Spirit, ascribes not to prayer pronounced only by the lips and tongue, but to the most secret, unvocal prayer sent up from the depths of the heart, which he teaches to perform not with actions of the body and not with the sound of the voice, but with the most fervent will, in all quietness, with contrition of thoughts and inward tears, with pain of soul and the closing of the doors of the mind. And he brings forth from Holy Scripture, as a testimony of this prayer, the God-seer Moses, and St. Anna, and the Righteous Abel, speaking thus:

"But are you pained in soul? You cannot but cry out, because to pray and entreat in the way I have mentioned is characteristic of one who is very pained. Moses also, being pained, prayed in this way, and his pain was heard; wherefore also God spoke to him: *Why dost thou cry out to Me?* (Ex. 14: 15). And Anna, again, fulfilled all that she wished without her voice being heard, because her heart cried out. And did not Abel pray in silence, and even having died? — and his blood gave forth a voice surpassing that of the trumpet. Do thou groan also, then, just as holy Moses; I do not forbid. Rend your heart, as the Prophet commanded, and not your garments. Call upon God out of the depths: *Out of the depths,* he says, *have I cried unto Thee, O Lord* (Ps. 129:1); from below, from the heart draw voice; make your prayer a sacrament." And later: "For you do not pray to a man, but to God Who is everywhere, Who hears before you speak and knows unuttered thoughts; if you pray in this way, you shall receive a great reward: *Thy Father,* He says, *which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*" And later: "Inasmuch as He is invisible, He desires that your prayer should be the same."

Do you see, O friends, how by the testimony of this invincible pillar of Orthodoxy there is another prayer than that pronounced by the lips: a secret, invisible, voiceless prayer offered from the depths of the heart to God, which, as a pure sacrifice, the Lord accepts as an odor of spiritual fragrance, rejoices in it and is glad, seeing that the mind, which above all should be consecrated to God, is united with Him in prayer. Wherefore, why do you arm your tongue with blasphemy against this prayer which is witnessed by the lips of Christ, St. John Chrysostom, slandering, hating, mocking, denying and shunning it as some foul thing, and in a word, not enduring even to hear of it? Fear and trembling overcome me by reason of your irrational undertaking.

Yet again, seeking the cause of your blasphemy, I ask you: Is not the reason why you blaspheme this most soul-saving prayer because, it may be, you have happened to see or hear that some one of the practicers of this prayer

has gone out of his mind, or has taken some deception in place of truth, or suffered some harm to his soul, and therefore you have fancied that mental prayer was the cause of such harm? But it is not so, no; that is not the case at all. Sacred mental prayer, according to the writings of the God-bearing Fathers, working by God's grace, purifies a man of all passions, rouses him to most fervent keeping of God's commandments, and preserves him unharmed from all the arrows and deceptions of the enemy. If, however, anyone dare to undertake this prayer with self-will, not in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, without questioning and taking counsel of those experienced in it, and being haughty, passionate, and infirm, he lives without obedience and submission, and in addition seeks only the life of a hermit without being worthy of seeing even a trace of such a thing because of his self-will: such a one, in truth, I also affirm, will easily fall into all the snares and deceptions of the devil. But is prayer the cause of such deception (*prelest*)? May it not be. And if for this you find fault with mental prayer, then you should also consider the knife to be at fault if a small child, because of his senselessness at play, should happen to stab himself with it. Likewise, in your view, one should also forbid soldiers to use the military sword which they receive to fight the enemy, if some senseless soldier should happen to stab himself with his own sword. But just as the knife and the sword are not guilty of any fault but only accuse the senselessness of those who stab themselves with them, so likewise the spiritual sword, sacred mental prayer, is innocent of any fault, but rather the self-will and pride of the self-willed are the cause of demonic deceptions and every spiritual harm.

But why, as if I had been uncertain up to now, do I ask of you the cause of your blasphemy against this sacred prayer? I know it for a certainty, O friends! I know the very cause of your babbling: First, your reading of the Holy Scriptures is not according to the commandment of Christ, that is, not with testing; second, mistrust of the teaching of our Holy Fathers who taught of this Divine mental prayer by the wisdom of the Spirit given them by God, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures; third, in addition, your extreme coarseness: it may be, you have never seen or heard of the writings of our God-bearing Fathers concerning this; or, if you have, then you do not in the least understand the power of their Divinely-wise words — behold the essential cause of your evil-wisdom.

If only you would read, with fear of God and strict attention and undoubting faith, with a labor-loving testing of them and with the humility of wisdom, the patristic books which are above all fitting to be read by monas-

tics and which contain in themselves the whole meaning of life according to the Gospel — the patristic books, I say, which are just as necessary to monks for the benefit and correction of the soul and for the acquiring of a true, undeceived and humble understanding as breath is necessary for physical life: if you would read these books in this way, God would never allow you to fall into such a pit of blasphemy. Rather, through this work he would kindle you by His Divine grace with His unutterable love, so that you would cry out with the Apostle: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ* (Rom. 8:35) which we have been enabled to attain by the mental work of this prayer? And not only would you not blaspheme it, but you would even be zealous to lay down your life for it, perceiving in very deed and experience benefit for your soul beyond words from this mental heedfulness. But since you do not read the books of the Holy Fathers with undoubting faith, or in reading them you do not trust them, as the fruits of your blasphemy indicate, or else you entirely disdain to read them: therefore you have fallen into such ungodly sophistry that, as if you had never heard of the Christian writings, you blaspheme and deny this sacred prayer of which the entire Holy Scripture, in the Divinely-wise interpretation of the Holy Fathers, gives testimony.

But in order that you and all who doubt concerning this may be delivered from such harm to the soul, I find no more fitting treatment than this: that I shall strive, as much as the Lord by His grace favors and helps me, to show that our God-bearing Fathers, enlightened by God's grace, have established the building of their soul-profiting teaching concerning this all-sacred prayer performed secretly by the mind in the heart, on the unmoving rock of Holy Scripture. And do you, having yourselves come to see evidently and clearly the truth of the teaching of the Holy Fathers, with the cooperation of the grace of God secretly touching your souls, and having been healed of your infirmity of soul, offer to God most sincere repentance over your inclination— and you shall become worthy of His Divine mercy and complete forgiveness of your sin.

(*Continued from page* 252)

14. In Kiev he is informed of his Mother's sorrow.

YOUR MOTHER, after your departure from Kiev, fell into such sorrow beyond words that she wept inconsolably and lamented bitterly, and in her boundless sorrow she even thought of eating and drinking nothing until she died, and after some days her mind began to be affected. But then some kind of fear came over her, and she became afraid and began to read the Akathist. Then, entering an ecstasy of mind, she became silent, and in half an hour she cried out in a loud voice: 'If such is the will of God, then I will sorrow no longer over my son.' Returning to herself, she confessed before her spiritual father and before everyone the following: 'When I became weak from not eating and from sorrow and expected soon to die, a terror and great fear came upon me, and I saw a multitude of demons, very dark and fearful, who tried to fall upon me. Then I began to ask you for books, and I fervently read the Akathist to the Most Holy Mother of God, without ceasing all day and night, and by reading this I guarded myself against the attacks of the demons; for they, hearing me read the Akathist, trembled from fear and could not at all come near me. And after this I was in an ecstasy, and looking up I saw the heavens opened and an Angel of God coming down from the heavens like lightning most bright. And when he stood near me he began to say to me: "O miserable one! What have you done? Rather than love the Lord and your Creator with all your heart and soul, you have loved His creation, your son, more than your Creator; and for the sake of your senseless and God-denying love you have purposed to kill yourself by hunger, and for this to fall into eternal condemnation. But be it known to you that your son, God's grace attending him, will unfailingly be a monk. And it is fitting for you also, imitating your son in this, to renounce the world and everything in the world and become a nun. Such is the will of God; and if you shall oppose this will of God, then by the permission of Christ the Lord, my God and Creator, I will give you over to the demons who wait to devour you, so that your soul and body may be dishonored and that other parents may learn not to love their children more than God." The Angel of God having said this and other like things to me, I cried out: "If such is the will of God, from now on I will sorrow no longer over my son." And immediately the demons vanished; and the Angel of the Lord, rejoicing. ascended into Heaven.' Her spiritual father and relatives, hearing this from her, in fear glorified God, and at the same time rejoicing, they went to their homes."

15. His mother becomes a nun.

PAISIUS, hearing this from his relative, had great fear in his soul for having brought such great sorrow to his mother by his departure; but he was comforted by his mother's intention, obeying the will of God, to become a nun. This intention was fulfilled, for she entered a convent and was tonsured, receiving in place of Irene the name of Juliana. Remaining in the convent, she labored in monasticism for the salvation of her soul for ten years and more, and then she departed to the Lord.

16. Paisius leaves Kiev and comes to Vlachia.

BEING in the Holy Lavra of the Kiev Caves, as was said above, Paisius went often to the holy caves and kissed the holy relics with fervent love and with tears, begging help from the Saints to direct him on the path of salvation. With fervent desire he desired the quiet life of silence in the desert with a spiritual father who was versed in all the Divine and patristic writings and who forced himself and prospered in deeds, and who was not unskilled in the monastic warfare against the demons and the passions. He desired to remain in poverty and want in the desert, working with his own hands for whatever he needed. And after a short time, by God's Providence, he found two estimable monks who were seeking to go into Vlachia; he begged them to accept him also on the journey, and when they agreed he prepared for the journey, and, praying to the Lord, they set out on their way.

17. The Skete of Treisteny; Elder Basil. 18. Paisius does not desire to accept ordination to the priesthood.

HAVING SAFELY crossed the Ukraine and likewise Moldavia, and having journeyed for many days, with God's help they reached Vlachia and came to the Skete of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, which is called Treisteny, where the superior, Hieromonk Demetrius, received them with love and comforted them. The Elder of this Skete, Schema-hieromonk Michael, had gone on urgent business for a time to the Ukraine, to the monastery of St. Matrona. Our Father was remaining in this Skete under general obedience, when there came for a visit some brothers of the Skete of Merlopolyany, that is, Apple Fields, where the common teacher and instructor in monastic life of all the brethren was the holy Elder, Schema-monk Basil, concerning whose elevated life and wisdom our Father wrote a little, which I here give word for word: "Out of zeal for God he had lived previously in Russia and in the mountains of Moshensk and in other wildernesses not a little time with great zealots of monastic life, and he came with the aforementioned Hieromonk Mi-

chael, his disciple, to the God-preserved land of Vlachia to stay. This God-pleasing man was very skilled in understanding of the Divine Scriptures and the teachings of the God-bearing Fathers, and in spiritual understanding, and in perfect knowledge of the sacred canons of the Holy Eastern Church and of their interpretations, incomparably surpassing all the Fathers of his time. The fame of his teaching and his God-pleasing instruction on the path of salvation was spread everywhere."

This Elder of holy life, I say again, stayed there in the Skete of Treisteny for several days, speaking many soul-profiting words to the brethren; and our Father, hearing them, rejoiced with inexpressible joy and glorified God with tears that He had enabled him to see such a man and hear such words from him. And the Elder, through the superior, called a certain Dometius and our Father to come and live with him. But Paisius, being warned by one father, feared that the Elder would force him even against his will to accept the priesthood, and so he replied through the superior: "I have no intention to enter upon such a great and fearful rank to my very death." This is the reason why our Father was not enabled to live in the Skete of Merlopolyany with such a holy Elder, but remained in the Skete of Treisteny. Inasmuch as this Skete, as also the Skete of Dolgoutsy, was under the spiritual guidance of the Elder Basil, some have said that our Father was for a certain time under obedience to Elder Basil. Even if he did not live with the Elder, however, he was nonetheless enabled to be his disciple, as will be set forth below.*

19. A TRIAL.

AFTER THE DEPARTURE of Elder Basil, a short time passed and then there came the all-joyful news that Elder Michael was returning from the Ukraine and was already approaching the monastery. Hearing this, the superior and all the brethren rejoiced, and going out to meet him, they received his blessing, and there was great joy to all.

Our Father, going through general obedience, as has been said, was given by the superior a cell not far from the Skete next to a creek, from where the church was visible. And once, while living in this cell, it happened that when sleeping alone at night, he did not hear the beating of the wood for Matins; and it was Sunday. When he woke up he immediately ran to church, and hearing that the Gospel had already been read and they had begun to sing

* Unfortunately, almost nothing is known of the Elder Basil except what is contained in this Life of Elder Paisius. He wrote four profound introductions to the writings of Sts. Gregory of Sinai, Philotheus of Sinai, Hesychius, and Nilus of Sora, advising hesychasts how to make practical use of these writings; these were printed together with the Life of Elder Paisius in the Optina edition.

the canon, he became exceedingly sad, and out of shame and confusion he did not enter the church but returned to his cell, sorrowing and weeping over such a trial that had befallen him. And so much was he overcome by sorrow and fear and shame beyond words, that he could not at all come even to the Divine Liturgy, but going a little way from his cell, he sat down on the ground under a tree and bitterly wept. After the Liturgy, when the time for the meal came, the Elder and the superior and the brethren, not having seen him either at the Matins or at the Liturgy, were surprised at this. And the Elder said to the brethren: "I beg you, for the Lord's sake, wait a little with the meal until we find out what has happened to our brother Platon." And having said this, he sent one brother, the monk Athanasius, a copier of patristic books, to seek him out; and he, having with difficulty found him sitting on the earth and bitterly weeping, began to ask the cause of his weeping. But he, out of shame, could answer nothing but only wept again, and he was scarcely able, being persuaded by the monk, to confess the cause of his sorrow. The monk, spiritually consoling him, greatly begged him not to sorrow beyond measure over the trial that had befallen him, but to go immediately to the Skete to the holy fathers "who," he said, "are waiting for you and have not sat down to eat."

Paisius on his part could scarcely say to him: "And how, holy father, can I go to the holy fathers, and with what countenance shall I appear before them, having committed such a crime to my eternal shame before God and before them?" And be begged Athanasius with tears to leave him and not compel him to go to the fathers; but Athanasius, without weakening, all the more begged him and exhorted him not to sorrow but to go. And he was scarcely able to compel him even against his will to go with him to the Skete. Having gotten up, he went, weeping and lamenting, and when he came to the Skete and saw the Elder with all the brethren sitting at table — Oh! what fear and measureless shame fell upon him then, and he fell before them to the ground, weeping bitterly and lamenting inconsolably and begging forgiveness.

All became terrified, and immediately the Elder, the superior and the brethren got up and raised him from the ground. And when they heard from the monk who had brought him the cause of his weeping and sorrow, all the brethren were astonished and, sighing over their own state, became silent. The Elder, as a loving father, began to console him with spiritual words, asking, begging, and exhorting him not to grieve beyond measure over such an involuntary thing that had happened; and the Elder having consoled him a little, all gave thanks to God that they had found him well in soul and body; and so they went into the refectory and began to eat, commanding him also to sit with them at table and eat. Paisius, however, out of the sorrow and shame

which overcame him at that time, could not eat at all, only eating a little later on, as he himself has written. And from that time on, for as long as he remained there, he did not dare to sleep at night lying down on a bed, but only slept a little sitting on a bench.

The Elder and other of the eldest spiritual fathers, going out of the refectory, sat down under the fruit trees and, conversing, glorified God the Giver of gifts, being astonished at such divine zeal in one so young. And the Elder said to all the brethren present, especially to the youngest ones, our Father being still in the refectory: "See, brethren, what zeal for God and fiery sorrow this brother has; let him be for all of you an example for emulation in diligent rising and going to the rule of prayer in church. For he, even for an involuntary missing of prayer became so sad in soul, and grieved and wept so bitterly, that he deprived himself even of bread and did not wish to see the light of the sun for his great pain and contrition of heart. And so do you also pray with your whole soul to Christ God, forcing yourselves to do all His commandments, so that the Lord may grant to blaze up in you all such zeal and fiery sorrow, concerning which the divine Isaac in many places (Homily 55) and other Holy Fathers command that we should pray and beg for ourselves from God." And having said this, the Elder became silent; and the brethren, with heads bowed, went each to his own cell.

20. Elder Michael.

OUR FATHER, remaining, as has been said, in obedience in this Skete, most diligently attended to the spiritual words which came from the mouth of the Elder Michael. For so much did this man prosper in the humility of wisdom and in love and in spiritual understanding, and to such an extent did he receive from God the gift of revealing the mysteries of the Scriptures, that he became like unto his own Elder Basil; for he had zeal to imitate actively in everything his labor and asceticism. Wherefore the Spirit shone forth in him in such gifts as have been described and, but for a little, in every other gift. Often he would instruct the brethren concerning the numerous most needful matters of the soul, saying: "It befits us, brethren, in these poor times, with all our soul even unto death to hold on, as a true and inexhaustible instructor of the monastic spiritual work and understanding, to the teaching and instruction of our Holy and God-bearing Fathers, and to follow them faithfully in word and deed." And again he would speak to them of the diligent and correct keeping of the soul-saving commandments of the Gospel of Christ; and again, of the keeping of the canons, traditions, and teachings of all the Holy Orthodox Ecumenical and Local Councils of the Eastern Church and those of

the great God-bearing Fathers and the Apostles; and again, of the diligent keeping of the Holy Fasts and other church regulations handed down by the Holy Apostles and great God-bearing Fathers to all Christians. And of other needful things this blessed Elder with sighings and with tears would say to the brethren: "Let us not heed the condition of these fierce times and the weakness of men who live without fear, but let us keep what has been handed down by the Holy Apostles and by the Holy Fathers at the Councils, as Basil the Great says: Everything which has been handed down from of old from the Holy and God-bearing Fathers is worthy of veneration, but what is newly proposed is most unfitting and infirm." Seeing and hearing all this, our Father Paisius rejoiced with joy beyond words, and with many tears he gave thanks to God that He had enabled him to hear and make use of such spiritual words from such holy men as Basil and Michael.

21. Schema-monk Onuphrius. 22. Paisius goes to the Skete of Kyrkoul with Schema-monk Onuphrius.

AFTER A TIME there came to the Skete the reverend Schema-monk, Father Onuphrius, from the Skete called Kyrkoul, to visit the Elder and the brethren. And, with the blessing of Elder Michael, Father Onuphrius, in the presence of all the brethren, gave a spiritual talk in the Lord, speaking of the condition of his Skete Kyrkoul, informing about its beauty, and the healthfulness of the waters and air, and the multitude of various fruits and vegetables, and of everything else suitable for monastic life, and of how great was its quietness and silence. By this he inspired our Father also with zeal to see this place; and so, thanking the most honored Elder Michael for his fatherly love and instruction, and taking his blessing, he went with Father Onuphrius on the road that lay before them through immense forests and beautiful meadows and high mountains, and with God's help on the third day he came to the Skete in which the superior, the reverend Hieromonk Theodosius, received him with love; and in the morning he was assigned a desert cell, and he remained in his cell rejoicing and praising God with tears, learning true monastic silence, the mother of repentance and prayer, in the words of St. Isaac (Homily 41). And for necessities in the beginning he had help from the superior, Father Theodosius.

23. His stay and labors in the Skete of Kyrkoul.

THE RULE of this Skete was according to that of the Sketes of the Holy Mountain Athos: only on Sundays and feast days did all the brethren gather together for the rule of prayer in church, and after the Divine Liturgy a common meal was set before everyone. After the meal the brethren occupied

themselves in spiritual conversations and counsels, and strengthening each other with sighings and with tears, they begged each other to endure manfully and gratefully in the various fierce trials and sorrows of soul and body, and they prayed often, falling down before Christ God with tears. They spent their time in this way until Vespers; and after Vespers all who were living as hermits dispersed to their cells.

In this way our Father also remained in silence in his cell, doing some small handiwork (spoons), paying careful heed to prayer and to the reading of patristic writings and to the love of God, and understanding his sins and daily faults, and the death which will come unexpectedly, and the terrible Judgment of God, and the fierce and eternal tortures prepared for the demons and unrepentant sinners, weeping bitterly and lamenting every day; thus he placed a beginning to his correction before God, and his burden was lightened by confession with tears, and he obtained peace and joy in the Lord and some consolation of soul. Restraining his thoughts from wandering and his mind from evil thoughts, he remained for a time in humility and in hope on Christ God His Saviour.

24. He visits Elder Onuphrius.

FATHER PAISIUS would go also to the aforementioned Onuphrius the desert-dweller, who lived on a high mountain an hour's distance from the Skete. His cell was on the very peak of this mountain, and from it there were visible from afar beautiful wildernesses, mountains and hills, and valleys, all covered with great forests; and below, at the foot of the mountain, there was a spring of ever-flowing water. The Elder remained in prayer, in reading and psalmody, and handiwork. In words he was most consoling, and with fervor he would tell his questioners in detail of the passions of soul and body, of the terrible and unrelenting battle with the demons, of their unimaginable snares and artifices. "And if," he would say, "Christ the true Saviour did not stand up for His people in His love for mankind and defend the faithful, not one of the Saints in truth would be saved, as is clearly affirmed by the Most Holy Patriarch of Constantinople Callistus II." Again, he would say: "But for those who with faith and love, with humility and with tears fall down before Christ God, there is soon consolation of soul beyond words, peace, joy in the Lord and fervent love for God. As witness of these there will come undeceived tears abounding from love, self-reproach, humility and unending thanksgiving to Christ God; and the hour when these come makes the whole man, out of love for God, unaffected by this world. And if anyone has come to this even in part, he knows that I speak the truth."

All this the blessed Onuphrius clearly set forth to our Father, who was thirsting with all his soul; and from his holy conversation our Father became so inflamed in heart, and was so much burning with Divine love as with a flame, and became so exceedingly zealous for spiritual labor, that hiding himself somewhere, he fell with his face to the earth, beating his breast, and with bitter tears he prayed to Christ God, begging help; and thus he resolved to make his vows for the beginning of the (monastic) work. However, he could not give himself over in obedience to those God-inspired fathers, inasmuch as he was in the sketes and not in the desert; and he feared to remain there, lest he would be compelled, as has been said, to accept the fearsome yoke of priesthood, which he did not desire.

The Blessed one remained there in Vlachia just three years and a little more in order to learn the Moldo-Vlachian language, and also, given such a favorable time, that he might gather from those Holy Fathers the spiritual honey that came forth from their lips, which he delighted in even to satiety. This he kept in the closet of his heart and sealed it for a time with silence, that the souls which would later attach themselves to him might delight in it and be filled with it and be aroused to virtue. From these fathers he came to understand what is true obedience, from which is born true humility and is accomplished the mortification of one's own will and understanding and of everything that is of this world, which is the beginning and end never-ending of true monastic activity.

As for the nature of vision, and true silence of the mind, and heedfulness to prayer performed by the mind in the heart — these he not only came to understand, but in part also came to enjoy in actuality their Divine power ever moving in the heart. For he would never have been able to endure such poverty and sorrow with ease and good-heartedness, and to rejoice in every trial and difficulty, and to glorify God in every sorrow, so that he was enabled to become an emulator to a certain extent of Christ his Lord Who became lowly for our sake, if his heart had not been inflamed from Divine prayer with love for God and his neighbor. Of love for God he had already made a beginning in his youth by reading books, and this Divine seed, in accordance with the words of the Lord, falling on good earth later gave forth fruits of the Spirit a hundredfold. And there, strengthened by the doing of God's commandments among those skete ascetics, and by diligent attention to moral virtue and unceasing mental prayer, he made in his heart a fragrance of Christ; which, being watered by many tears, with God's cooperation, grew and blossomed.

Thus our Father, being strengthened by Divine heedfulness of mind, prospered in the Grace of Christ, which filled his soul with perfect love for God and his neighbor and with joy in the Lord beyond words, and which inflamed his soul with zeal, as was said, for spiritual labor, as a deer thirsting for springs of water.

Next Issue: *II. Blessed Paisius on Mount Athos,* 1746-1763.

IN MEMORIAM

Bishop Savva of Edmonton

AND THE GLORIFICATION OF ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH

1. *The Necrology by Archbishop Athanasius of Argentina*
(*Nasha Strana,* Buenos Aires, no. 1198, Feb. 6, 1973)

WE HAVE RECEIVED the sad news that on January 30, 1973, Bishop Savva (Sarachevitch) died in the city of Edmonton, Canada. Having served as Bishop of Edmonton since 1958, he had been in retirement since September, 1971.

Bishop Savva was born on February 22, 1902, in the city of Lyutavitch in Yugoslavia (Belgrade region). In 1923 he finished the higher school in the city of Chachak-Kraguyevatz, and then he entered the Department of Law of the University of Belgrade, after finishing which he occupied the positions of lawyer and judge in the cities of Trelog, Chachak, Gnilas, and Belgrade. In the intervals between his duties as judge he began to study in the Department of Theology at the University of Belgrade, and he finished this course in 1943.

Bishop Savva was a highly educated and a just man. He did not fear or hesitate to accuse injustice and falsehood.

Finding himself in the emigration after the Second World War, he came to Buenos Aires at the beginning of 1948 and soon went to Bishop Leonty in Paraguay to the monastery which the latter had established there.

There Bishop Leonty tonsured him a monk and ordained him deacon on the feast of the Annunciation in the same year. From Paraguay he returned to Buenos Aires, where Archbishop Panteleimon of Argentina and Buenos Aires ordained him priest on August 15, 1949, o.s. (the Dormition of the Mother of God). He was assigned to the Holy Resurrection Cathedral in Buenos Aires.

In December, 1956, Bishop Athanasius of Argentina assigned him as priest of the Holy Protection Church in Temperley, where he served until his departure for New York in August, 1958.

By decree of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside of Russia he was consecrated Bishop of Edmonton, a vicar of the Canadian Dio-

cese. His consecration took place in the Synodal church in New York City on September 15|28, 1958.

The reposed Bishop Savva had great veneration for Archbishop John (Maximovitch) of San Francisco and wrote a number of articles on him in *Orthodox Russia.* Among the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia he was an outstanding archpastor in his education, eloquence, and zealous service to the Church.

Two weeks before his death, Bishop Savva wrote a letter to his friend in Buenos Aires in which, among other things, he wrote: "As for me, glory be to God, I am living quietly. I would not want to change my situation. St. Gregory the Theologian wrote: 'For those who leave thrones do not lose God, but they shall have a See above, which is much higher and more secure than these Sees below.' "

Eternal memory to the reposed hierarch.

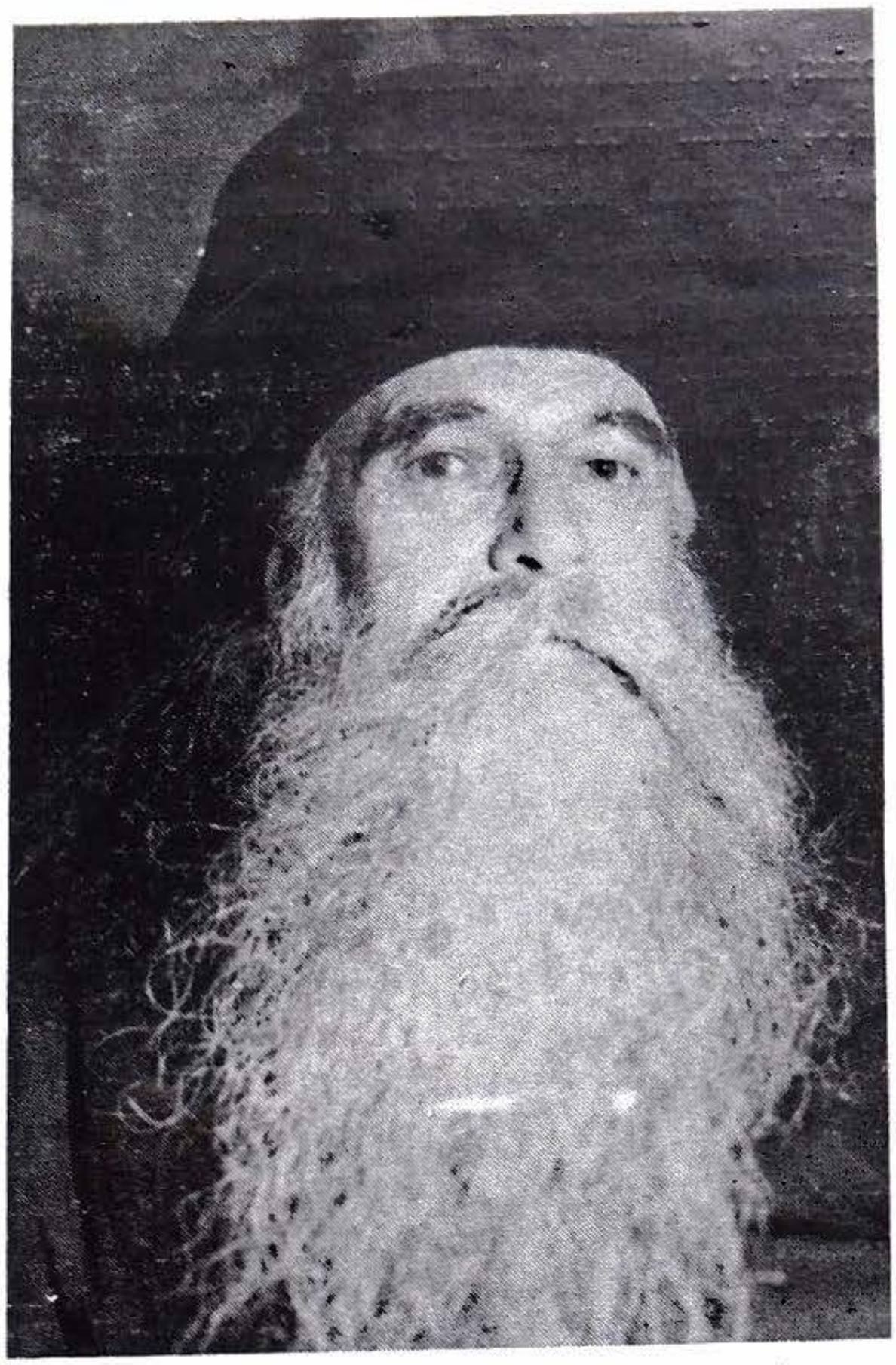
2. *Bishop Savva, Zealot of Spiritual Renewal*

SOME THIRTY YEARS ago Bishop Savva, then a practicing judge in Yugoslavia, abandoned his worldly career and consciously entered upon the path of service to Christ's Church. Finding himself abroad after the Second World War, he entered the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, and to his very death he served this Church with a rare devotion and zeal, revealing himself not only as a loving and much-loved pastor, but also as an awakener of the Orthodox conscience.

Having become a bishop, his concern reached out to the whole of Russia abroad, and in the pages of *Orthodox Russia* he tried to awaken the Orthodox Russian people to an awareness of the apocalyptic nature of the times and of their calling and responsibility to be *conscious* Orthodox believers. In the early years of his episcopacy he called for the formation of "Brotherhoods of Spiritual Renewal," and later he placed special emphasis on the need for redoubled prayer for suffering Russia. His fervent appeals did awaken some response, but in the end the result was not too great, doubtless owing chiefly to the extremely unfavorable conditions of the Russian emigration, overwhelmed as it is by worldly cares and temptations.

Bishop Savva's concern extended also to new converts to Orthodoxy, and in particular he entered into contact with and inspired many English-speaking converts in America and Canada.

In the last years of his life, Bishop Savva undertook a new labor of love and zeal, and it is very likely for this that he will be most remembered. He early recognized the great spiritual stature of Archbishop John Maximo-



BISHOP SAVVA OF EDMONTON
1902-1973

vitch and was one of those hierarchs who gathered around him and acknowledged him as their spiritual leader; and when the need arose, he came to Archbishop John's defense, considering it providential that he could use his knowledge of law in order to help him when he was unjustly brought to court in San Francisco.

In the first months after Archbishop John's repose in 1966, there appeared in the Russian press many personal testimonies of his holiness and ascetic life and of what he meant to individual members of his flock. Soon, however, these began to appear less frequently, and it was evident that their significance was limited and chiefly personal and that by themselves they would not preserve the memory of the holy hierarch beyond the lifetimes of those who already knew him. It was then that Bishop Savva began to publish his own material on Archbishop John. This appeared in the form of fifteen articles in *Orthodox Russia* in 1967 and 1968, and it was soon apparent that this was material with a different dimension and purpose. In the place of limited

individual memories, he offered a collection of personal testimonies, carefully selected and verified, which were arranged so as to point out various characteristics and aspects of Vladika John's life and sanctity. More than this, Bishop Savva, with his great love for and knowledge of the Holy Fathers (at his death he left a collection of patristic texts written out in his own hand), interspersed these testimonies with citations from the lives and writings of the Holy Fathers, in order to make clear the whole Orthodox tradition of sanctity in which Vladika John had his definite place.

In these articles Bishop Savva discusses and places in patristic context such aspects of Vladika John's sanctity as his miraculous healings and exorcisms; his strict asceticism and sleeplessness; his appearance in dreams after his repose; his clairvoyance; striking incidents such as the visible fire which once appeared when he served the Divine Liturgy; the bitter persecution which he suffered; and even that which very few as yet have come to value in him, perhaps because almost never before has this kind of sanctity been joined to hierarchal rank: his foolishness for Christ's sake. Bishop Savva in these articles offered in effect a brief course in patristic education to the Orthodox people, and thereby he perhaps sowed seeds that will eventually bring much greater fruits than all his other praiseworthy labors for spiritual renewal.

Bishop Savva's own comments on Vladika John in these articles are revealing and significant. In one of them he writes: "I write about Vladika John and everything somehow becomes pleasant in my soul. I would not want any important information about him to be lost" (*Orthodox Russia*, 1967, no. 16). He was constantly astounded by the wonder of such sanctity in today's world: "What great power was revealed in this small, thin body! What apostolic zeal and burning of spirit! And in general, what a miracle of the contemporary world he was!" (1967, no. 6.) At times he reproaches the insensitivity and coldness of the Orthodox people: "Oh, what a great righteous man and man of prayer we had and did not know how to value him!" (1967, no. 7.) For him Vladika John is more alive and accessible after his death than before: "A wondrous miracle: Vladika, even after death, comforts his flock, those who revere him, and all who come to his grave" (1967, no. 14). Bishop Savva openly compares Vladika John to the great saints of the past and places him in their midst: "And so, at that time there was St. Simeon the Stylite [who exorcised demons], and now Vladika John. That was in ancient times, but now it is in our own day. The power of God, just as through the holy Stylite, so now also through Vladika John, has acted and exorcised the evil spirit of the torturer. *Wondrous is God in His Saints, the God of Israel*" (1967, no. 17).

It may be that Bishop Savva saw in Vladika John a key, as it were, to that spiritual renewal for which he labored; doubtless he saw in his glorifica-

tion a source of great spiritual strength for the faithful. In one of his articles in *Orthodox Russia* (1967, no. 19), Bishop Savva pointed out the little-known fact that it was a Serbian hierarch, Bishop Nicholas Velimirovitch, who in large measure gave the impetus for the canonization of St. John of Kronstadt by the Russian Church Outside of Russia. He thought the time was already ripe for this after the First World War, and by the 1930's a service and akathist had been written to St. John and published for private use by the faithful; but it was especially Bishop Nicholas' letter to Metropolitan Anastassy in 1952 which led to the formation of a canonization committee (under the chairmanship of Archbishop John) and, eventually, to the canonization itself in 1964. And now it is also a Serbian hierarch, Bishop Savva — who, however, had a devotion to the Russian Church and people which is not surpassed even among Russian hierarchs! — who has given the first impetus for the future canonization, in God's time, of Archbishop John, an event for which he was consciously laying the foundation and preparing the Orthodox people. Thus he himself becomes a chapter in the life and glorification of Blessed Archbishop John!

At his death, which occurred on the feast day of one of his beloved Holy Fathers whom he was always quoting, St. Anthony the Great, Bishop Savva left unpublished materials on Archbishop John, having hoped one day to publish a whole book on him. These materials he left to the Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, thus giving us his blessing to continue this work for him. Parts of this material, both published and unpublished, will appear in future issues of *The Orthodox Word*. We urge all readers who have material to add to this collection, concerning the life of Archbishop John or evident healing or help through his prayers, to send it to: The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, 96076.

The following sermon well shows the great love and zeal of Bishop Savva toward the holy hierarch, and his eloquence in expressing them:

3. *Sermon of Bishop Savva of Edmonton Spoken on the Fortieth Day after the Repose of Archbishop John* (Orth. Russia, 1966, no. 16)

FATHERS, FRIENDS, brethren and sisters, hear me. I have come to pay respect to the newly-reposed slave of God, Vladika Archbishop John. I have come to pray together with you for the repose of his soul on this significant and decisive fortieth day, the day when the place is determined where his soul will dwell until the general and terrible Judgment of God, at which the fate of each of us will be finally decided for all eternity. I have come to look once more at this city in which he lived, at the holy tem-

ple in which he prayed, at the streets where he walked, at the hospitals in which he visited the sick. I have come to look once more upon his flock which he loved so much, upon the youth whom he so wondrously attracted to the Church of God. I have come, not without grief, I say, to this place of his sufferings of soul, the place where he bore his crown of thorns, his difficult cross.

I was with him from the beginning of his sufferings here, and I helped him while he was alive as well as I could and knew how; and would it be honorable to leave him now without respect, without prayer together with you for his soul which suffered so much, on this day which is so great for him?! He was my friend and father and — forgive me — my heart is there, in this confining tomb, in the grave with Vladika. My heart weeps over my father! However, these tears are only tribute-money paid to our human nature. It is not right to give oneself over to excessive sorrow for the reposed, for *the remembrance of the righteous is with praises* (Prov. 10:7). Let us marvel at the greatness of God: how wondrous is God in His Saints!

Yes, the death of the righteous is the end of the battle with the passions of the flesh; after death the strugglers are glorified and receive victorious crowns.

Who, if not Vladika John, mastered his body? As you know, he did not give it rest day or night. Only a shadow remained of it. His bodily members were worn out from fasting and from the labor of vigil. Grant him, O Lord, the eternal stronghold and lead him into Thy eternal light!

With the hope of the ancient saints he labored fervently to give rest to those sorrowing and in need. May he repose in Thy harbor, O Lord!

Sorrow has come to us: we have been deprived of him who took care of us. I received a letter from him in which his concern for me was manifested. Perhaps this was the last letter that he wrote in his life — he wrote it on July 1st, and on the seal of the Seattle post office on the envelope is indicated the date July 2nd, in the afternoon, that is, the day of his repose.

But we must know that the hour of his departure was determined by the Lord; wherefore, restrain your tears and raise your voice in praise of this struggler!

O our beloved Vladika! The Church remembers your zeal, for you were her true archpastor, and by your prayer you saved your flock!

You were a priest like unto Aaron; you were a chief-priest like unto Moses; Joseph did you emulate in continence, and in zeal Elias.

Always before your eyes was the image of your Lord; with indefatigable zeal you strove toward the goal which the Lord pointed out to you; where-

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fore as His faithful slave the Lord called you to Himself and separated you from us.

Your working day did not end with night; night was the field of your labors of prayer. Therefore, it may be that it happened not without God's Providence that we sang your funeral and buried you at night.

Now you no longer bear the burden of your body; from henceforth your lot is in Paradise.

Who does not weep over your departure? Who does not rejoice over the crown which you have obtained? Praise be to Him Who chose you!

Your voice has become silent for us, but may your blessings be poured out abundantly on us! We are deprived of seeing your face, but may your name shine out among us!

You have left us orphans, our father, but may your prayer be for us a mother, and for its sake may the all-praised Trinity protect our souls! From that holy altar at which you served holily and reverently, may the glorification of your memory ascend from ages unto ages!

May your prayer overshadow your flock! Pray for its salvation. May all who have now gathered to pay respect to your memory receive the blessing of your prayers; may they one day rejoice with you in the heavenly bridal chamber, and may they magnify and glorify Him Who chose you!

O righteous God! With the Saints grant rest to the much-suffering soul of Thy slave, our beloved Archbishop John! Amen.

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